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archive, 32 of Ozu's 34 extant films are now housed in the United States.⁹ With the US now a major repository of Ozu films, it is to be hoped that more Americans will be able to enjoy the total spectrum of Ozu's work, which to date has had only limited exposure. Ozu's films are a major monument in the history of art. Their visual brilliance, wit, and concentration are the work of a consummate artist with more than a touch of genius.

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NOTES

1. Ozu (Berkeley: 1974), p. 232.
2. Ozu's use of chiaroscuro lighting and his near obsession with inanimate objects in the prewar films suggests that German films from the twenties may have had a considerable influence on him. Tadao Sato has noted that German Expressionist films influenced a number of Japanese films in the twenties and "stimulated the development of a domestic, everyday kind of realism"—the kind of realism Ozu would adopt for his films. *Currents in Japanese Cinema*, trans. Gregory Barrett (New York: 1982), p. 32.

3. Actually *Early Summer* also contains a cinematic joke clearly by the same mind that invented the *If I Had a Million* sequence in *Woman of Tokyo*. Noriko and her friend walk towards an upper room in a restaurant to catch a glimpse of the man Noriko might have married. Cut to the camera dolly down the corridor—not of the restaurant—but of Noriko's house, where a new scene begins. Richie calls the cut "simple sloppiness" (p. 112), which it clearly is not. Rather Ozu the tease is at work again. But his heart had gone out of such cinematic tricks, and he rarely used them in the post-1949 period.

4. *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: 1979), p. 160f.

5. "Yasujiro Ozu: Emotion and Contemplation," *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1978/79, p. 45.

6. The routines performed by Ozu's college boys at the slightest provocation recall Harold Lloyd's little dance step in *The Freshman* (1925). Lloyd appears to have been a favorite of Ozu's. In a lecture accompanying the screening of *Days of Youth*, Kristin Thompson argued convincingly for the influence of Lloyd on that film (New York: 17 December 1982). In addition a poster for a Lloyd film appears in the background of a still from the lost *I Graduated, But . . .* (see Richie, p. 206).

7. Sato, p. 34.

8. Akira Iwasaki, "Ozu and Japanese Film," *Kinema Jumbo*, special issue, 1964.

9. *The Munekata Sisters* and *A Hen in the Wind* are not available in the US. Of the 32 films housed in the US only 19 are in general distribution through New Yorker Films and Films, Inc. Two films owned by the Library of Congress and three by the University of Wisconsin are available under special circumstances. Those purchased by the Museum of Modern Art may be viewed on the premises.

Confessions of a Feminist Porn Programmer

KAREN JAEHNE

I hate confessions. Fortunately, *Film Quarterly* is not usually the forum for such breast-baring, but the subject of pornography invariably elicits the most personal responses, most of which are based on very little exposure to "porn," or burdened with the guilt that usually accompanies the deliberate search for pornography. To Scott MacDonald's observations [*FQ*, Spring 1983], I would like to add an equally tenuous feminist perspective—that of someone who watched all or part of some 192 porn films in the space of six months. It was not for cheap thrills; it was a 20-hour per week job selecting films for late-night cable TV's "adult" programming.

Definitions of pornography may become arcane in other contexts, but as a programmer, I had to develop pragmatic, operational distinctions between porno movies, skin flicks, erotica, and "double-duty" productions available in "hard" or "soft" versions.

Whether other screeners and programmers have come to the same distinctions will remain a moot point, since very little research or even communication exists on the subject. "Porno" is the term for those "one-day wonders" with a strong emphasis on explicit sex acts, so that no matter how scratched the print may get, the audience will get off. Skin flicks, as the cute name implies, offer slightly more plot than genitalia and put clever disguises on porn; the plot remains, nevertheless, minimal. Behind erotica lies an abstract idea about sexuality: whereas the types named above are often action-oriented to the point of banality, the erotic film is self-conscious in using exhibitionism and explicit love-making to express a relationship more than skin-deep. "Double-duty" films exist in both a hard and soft version, the former for triple-X theaters, the latter for TV.

Work like this does not come easy. The

pay-TV station did not advertise the job. They were looking for someone “to help” the director of programming, who had found the task of seeking and selecting porn all too time- and psyche-consuming. The station management was quite uncertain of what it was doing in this game, but everyone else in cable-land was staying afloat, it seemed, by offering late-night porn, so some dignified executive board must have voted in the “sleaze to please” (as we called it). However that decision was enacted, we in programming were faced with the responsibility of satisfying the approximately 80% of viewers who paid extra for the adult-film service, which came on after 11 o’clock in the evening and, on weekends, offered sometimes two adult films per night. Each month we had to find seven new skin flicks to supplement existing programming; the general ratio of films screened to films selected was six to one. We were also faced with the job of soothing the fears of the station president who knew how many of the board watched this programming nightly, and how many of them were also closely allied with the FCC. I was not informed who these people were or what was the nature of their interest; I was just told to respect their potential power, if I screwed up, so to speak. To further compound the difficulty, the programming staff was all female, and among them some feminists, albeit *sans* radical rhetoric.

Thus, I found myself in a room with a first-class Sony monitor and shelves upon shelves of cassettes, where porn sought me. I was told that I was “overqualified for the job, the very reason you got it.” The station directed me to exercise caution in selecting types of “groupings,” which I later found out meant “Oreo” (miscegenation) and “fag” (male homosexuality) sex. The limitations of pay-TV or cable broadcasting were clearly those of TV anywhere as far as porn went: it was a question of what you could get away with. Because Washington, D.C. is situated on the outer edge of the “Bible Belt,” we had to listen to but tried to ignore the special interest groups like Morality in Media and WAP (Women Against Pornography), who were vociferously opposed to adult films on a “high penetration” (as it is truly called) medium.

“What kind of thing are you looking for?” I would ask.

“Whatever turns you on,” came the always glib, cautious answer.

Paradoxically, the more I watched—and in turn, was watched—the more convinced I became that it was a job worth doing. Ten years after the sexual revolution, I had stumbled across the chance to turn on the nation’s capital! And under a Republican administration! An assumption pervaded our office that conservatives would oppose porn films and liberals endorse them. But I discovered, as I slowly developed a public reputation as the station’s “Night Life” scout, that many conservatives were especially interested in what they liked to call “erotic art.” Of course, nobody but my colleagues—and that in jest!—wanted to admit that we were programming pornography. A recent article in *TV Guide* described the difference as merely semantic: “One man’s porn is another man’s erotica.” Whether that is true of women as well is debatable. Most feminists have a hysterical reaction to the word pornography, and as my editor once said, “There is ordinarily an inverse relationship between the amount of porn people have seen and their willingness to take passionate positions about it.” It does seem to be an issue that inspires great intolerance among liberals, most of whom consider themselves feminists.

I discovered three things which I intend to map out here as information for those who have not had my extensive if dubious opportunity to witness adult films. First, TV-soft core is definitely the new trend for pornography and the kind of FCC stipulations attempting to provide guidelines may or may not be respected by local cable stations. Without going into the tedious jargon which tries to remain nonspecific and requires concentrated interpretation on the part of programmers, the FCC provides signposts for programming but knows that the courts remain the watchdogs. Nobody in cable programming wants to provide the test case for the courts as to the suitability of late-night adult-films in their high-penetration medium. Although porn distributors often smirked at our particular caution and would inform me that another cable station in the Twin Cities area or Boston, or wherever, had taken a film

like *Urban Cowgirls* with all of its very explicit genitalia, we eschewed that film, in spite of its relatively high production values and good Country & Western music. Our motto was anything that would attract the attention of the FCC should not attract us. Ergo, I searched for soft-but-not-flaccid core. Soft-core is suggestive rather than explicit; it may show frontal nudity and even penises when non-erect, or at least not erect at anything greater than a 45-degree angle (yes, I often stopped the machine and measured). Insertion is forbidden and vaginal shots are very risky (preferably closed, if shown at all). There is a kind of air-brushed (what they used to do to pubic hair on the *Playboy* centerfolds) quality about soft-core which teases rather than instructs.

Secondly, every porn film seems to be aimed at a specific audience: gay, straight, *Hustler* mentality vs. *Playboy*, S & M, and fanciers of artsy erotica like Roger Vadim's work with Bardot or Sylvia Kristel. Distributors know the market well enough not to try to sell TV anything too hard, too kinky, or too cheap, so although I often received cassettes of a hard-X such as *Bourbon Street Girls* with its kinky cemetery sex scenes, the distributor immediately knew where I was coming from when I rejected it with some blunt comment about the risks of mind-fucking being perhaps greater than straight body-fucking. In another case of people indulging their wildest dreams amidst the ravages of apocalyptic events of WWII, we deemed the motivation exploitative, despite the fact that the sex scenes were tastefully arranged and edited. There were many cases of objectionable sequences being edited out, because the movie was otherwise fine. If possible, we asked the distributor to edit it, and usually permission was granted for us to do whatever we wanted, the "artistic integrity" of such films being apparently at a minimum for most producers and distributors.

Thirdly, many quality films of an erotic nature were unsuitable for us precisely because they *did* have some arguable "socially or artistically redeeming value." When I was hired, the director of programming was eager to have what she called "classy classics." Nevertheless, films like *In the Realm of the Senses*, *I Am Curious Yellow*, *WR—Mysteries of the Organism*, the Bardot vehicles, or Paso-

lini films had too much message and used eroticism in the service of some other idea. Often films were nixed because they contained sadomasochistic sequences; and no matter how carefully done, no matter how psychologically sound the motivation, the classification "high-brow" eliminated them as potential programming. The erotica found at film festivals—for example, *I Love You* or *The Fruits of Passion*—elicited a flow of letters from our viewers asking for something simpler.

The station had unusually strict guidelines about violence. We were more "up-tight," I was told by distributors, than anyone else pandering to public prurience. (A measure of the nonviolence of our programming was the rejection of *Night of the Living Dead* for Halloween because of the trowel-murder scene.) The moment I saw something sharp coming at vulnerable flesh, I would hit the eject button or the fast-forward button in order to see if this was dispensable. If a violent sequence occurred in the first few minutes, it was likely that the film was full of sexploitation violence, and I would zip through it on fast-forward, which cut down the viewing time to about 20 minutes. I often ejected the film after 10 minutes of fast-forward viewing. Subsequently I would find ways of insulting distributors who kept sending us skin-flicks in the rape genre. We even X-cized scenes where hands were bound to bedposts or whenever sex looked like anything other than the delightful participation of two (or more) consenting adults.

The most controversial movie we faced was *The Italian Stallion* with Sylvester Stallone, which satisfied everybody's interest in his measurements. Stallone, however, whips a girl with a super-stud brutality unpalatable to anything but the sadomasochistic impulse. We were faced with the dilemma of whether to give the public what they wanted (to see Stallone's non-thespian dimensions) or to exercise the censorship that would bring this film into ideological alignment with our general programming. The fact that the film was available was surprising. It is a not very well-kept secret that many famous actors and actresses initiated movie careers in blue movies. In fact, some of the most famous can be seen in European X-rated cinemas, although their agents

made sure that these films were removed from American distribution in the interest of a commercial image. The story is told that when Stallone tried to buy up the rights after he was launched in *Rocky*, the distributor had raised the price on *Italian Stallion* so high that "Rocky" said, "Fuck it." Ultimately, we respected Stallone's own position on the film, realizing that if the questionable sequences were removed, it would lose its "potency."

Such reasoning often went into the discussion of the artistic erotica which incorporated sadomasochistic themes. I had to reject Terayama's *Fruits of Passion* with its astounding shots of Klaus Kinsky *rampant* because of its torture sequences. Such a film tries to appeal through the classic defense (legal as well as artistic) of "socially redeeming value," by which the distributor, and presumably the producer, means Terayama's Marxist dialectic between the potential for revolution in the streets and the metaphoric exploitation in the brothel. I distinctly remember that distributor's appeal to me as an intellectual film buff and his subsequent frustration that my presence could not influence our programming to include his misunderstood but beautiful film. Such discussions only increased my own awareness of how homogenized, pasteurized and antiseptic our offerings on the altars of Aphrodite actually were. On my own occasional excursions to the neighborhood art house to see the Brazilian national dish, Sonja Braga, whose body I frankly admire and find beautiful without desiring to rape her (and I believe many men feel the same way), I appreciated all the more what could be done with erotica and how sex appeal could be translated into cinema without appealing to the limited interests of a traditional porn audience. It seemed to me that the more intellectually prudish cable TV became, the more justification (commercial as well as artistic!) the art house circuit would find for its own programming of erotica.

In fact, the whole issue of serious erotica revealed how shallow cable TV really is, because executives' fears of programming the great erotic films were redoubled by their fear of subtitles. There is, undoubtedly, an aura of seriousness surrounding anything with subtitles, which long offered a rationalization

for using the art house circuit for sexy movies. The exoticism or sheer "otherness" of a foreign film provides a distancing factor, so that the audience does not feel confronted with a mere sex film. But because we were not looking for exotica or alienation in our erotica, we avoided many of the greatest examples of erotic cinema. To me, this was a disappointment which eventually created a disaffection with my job. The more I watched of healthy, happy, bouncy, blossoming, mindless sex, the more I felt the numbing effects of our capitalist endeavor. To show the subscribers (who presumably looked for bread and circuses) sex with ideas would be to encourage them to think, and thinking was presumed to be counter-productive.

After I made my own *de rigueur* research visit to a porn house (which I did without the protective influence of a male feminist porn-watcher), I came to understand the appeal of the seamy, raunchy, grainy, groping quality of those pornos. Their relationship to that elusive quality we call realism was stronger than that of our slick, amusing and rather smug "adult" films on late-night TV. I came to the conclusion that, paradoxically, the adults viewing late-night porn were probably a more appropriate audience for the cheap stuff, because they could escape back into their own comfortable lives, while the poor suckers in the raincoat brigade seeking escapism in the cinema were being subjected to odoriferous, depressing, more or less faked "come shots," which we eschewed, because they were not essential to getting turned on, only to getting off. It has been pointed out that we thus eliminated a *sine qua non* of the traditional porn formula, at least as far as men are concerned. We, however, considered our business "turning on," and only that far.

I had undoubtedly reached what is called by media psychologists the "satiation factor," which refers to audiences' staying away from whatever it is they are supposed to "hunger after." The satiation factor is the driving force toward sterner stuff, prompting programmers to seek harder porn as the months go by. There are, however, well-made and entertaining sex films available which are designed exactly for TV watchers: a movie called *What Are Those Naked Bodies Doing on My Television Set?* is an omnibus of four

segments spoofing existing prime-time programming; *Love You Florence Nightingale* is Marilyn Chambers's latest and softest X-capade; *1001 Erotic Nights* is an expensive adventure with a Scherezade nightly charming the blood-thirsty sheik with her tails; and *Never Too Deep* is a clever gesture of one-upswomanship toward Linda Lovelace. These are technically competent films made by people at least creative enough to figure out how to make the skin-flick formula work for them—sometimes by working against it.

The formula itself is simple. Within the first ten minutes a teaser that is strong enough to keep the audience for more: it can be a frustrated woman masturbating, or a couple trying to find a place to do it, or a man so enchanted by a female form that he follows her, and so forth. This foreplay must be consummated in the ten minutes after that, usually with a heterosexual duet. A few more variations on that lead to a *ménage à trois* or a lesbian scene, also followed by something a bit harder—swapping partners, or convincing the only virgin in the film to submit, or another *ménage* of a different hue (racial stereotypes are very popular). If the budget is big enough, an orgy scene occurs at some point, but just imagine the problems of producing an orgy. Porn director Arthur Bressan explained to me that pornography is fun to make because it is like opera—arias, solos, duets, figuring out how to bring in the chorus. Soft porn displays a curious affirmation of the couple—married or mated, in which the bottom line is that sex is more fun with your spouse. The most extreme example of this is in *Exposed*, where the hero is a porn star who has quit to marry, returns to his role to help out a friend, is caught by his wife, who joins him on the set for his greatest performance.

No matter how well the formula is managed, the key is casting. "Porn star" used to be a fairly degrading classification, but now British princes enjoy lost weekends with them and the category "sex symbol" has been expanded to embrace what they unashamedly offer, though there is little that is symbolic about these offerings. The difference between a sex symbol and a porn star used to be that the former was ever so lightly clad and simulated sex for major companies' commercial releases, while the latter did the real thing that

went better with coke. The dynamic duo "sex and drugs" was assumed to dominate the porn industry, keeping women enslaved and addicted. Such charges can be found in *Not a Love Story* (the most pornographic piece of anti-porn I've ever watched). Porn actors, actresses and producers I've met are wont to laugh at this and express the conviction (or superstition?) that drugs interfere with on-set performance. It all sounds chillingly like legit film production, where drugs are known to have sent budgets sky-rocketing.

Some of the more stellar porn stars are celebrated in titillating magazine features, but many of them have fixed on careers in this genre and feel unthreatened by middle-class morality. Porn has its own stars, and many of those people are working hard to create their own kind of establishment. One actor who is charismatic and entertaining and more than head-and-shoulders above other porn actors is John Leslie. In interviews he admits to liking his work, considering it respectable and profitable—and immensely satisfying, so he has no intention of trying to sock his way into some studio system. Leslie is not glamorous, but he has "star quality," a filmland euphemism for intelligence. Another big male star is Eric Edwards, who often plays Leslie's buddy. He is better looking but bland. The biggest name is Harry Reems, recognized by people who have never seen a porn movie, perhaps, but he can't hold a candle to Leslie or Edwards. Sylvester Stallone comes in a weak fourth.

Besides Linda Lovelace and Marilyn Chambers, there is Sylvia Kristel (*Emmanuelle*, who is about to go into *Emmanuelle IV* in 3-D), a foreign star who has taken herself so seriously that in her most recent films she does only one sex scene—thereby rendering them unsatisfactory for TV's expectations. My favorite "actress" turned out to be a dark-haired, lanky, savvy-looking lady named Annette Haven, who appears in innumerable American adult movies; her name is some kind of guarantee, because she brings a sense of irony to what she is doing and moves gracefully. The new European sex star is Brigita Laihey, a blonde bomb who starred in many sizzling films there but went right into the stratosphere after a British production called *Erotica*, a lavish production with caba-

ret numbers by the Paul Ramond Revue in London. Reliable work horses of the industry are women like Veronica Hart, Georgina Spelvin, and Misty Rowe. These women get from \$100 up to \$250 per day's work, and many of them have hopes of developing careers in Hollywood. Loni Sanders has the right combination of looks and mannerisms to go legit in something like "Charley's Angels."

It becomes quickly apparent that few of these performers could straddle the DMZ between Hollywood's erotica and their porn training grounds. Many remember Carol Connors as the buxom blonde of The Gong Show and will think she found her natural role in *Candy* and its sequel *Candy Goes to Hollywood*, where she becomes an interesting parody of her "real" self from "The Dong Show." In these two films there is more Mack Sennett than porn, although porn is the excuse for the production. Moving in the other direction, Misty Rowe made an appearance as a more-or-less draped secretary in *The Man with Bogart's Face*. *Caligula* totally confused any distinction between exploitation movies *with* stars and exploitation movies *without*.

Auteurism has not yet been applied to porn, but, as compulsive as I am, I began noting stylistic trends of directors like Henry Paris (reportedly a pseudonym), Gail Palmer and Roberta Findlay. The latter two particularly interested me, because as women they provided testing grounds for the theory that feminist porn could and would be different. Generally speaking, I observed a reverse syndrome—what I call "feminismo," although women are not shown physically brutalizing men (which I would consider a masochistic male fantasy anyway). Mainly, men are used or utilized as sex objects. In *Playgirl*, a woman promoter launches, loves and leaves her men; after a romp through the various worlds of the New York art scene, the publishing business, and the pop music industry with the respective protégés, she returns each time to her husband. Its director, Roberta Findlay, began as an avant-garde film-maker in the sixties and says she can't see that much difference between what she did then and what she's doing now, except that she has bigger budgets and people seem to want to see what she makes. As an afterthought, she added, "Fem-

inism will always be the cultural front."

I seriously mulled over her pronouncement for months until I decided that *eroticism* will always be the cultural front where sexual power struggles and social evolution are thrown into relief. What most anti-porn feminists challenge is the exploitation of the female body as a symbol, claiming it inspires, aids and abets actual exploitation. I think this shows a curious leap of faith in porn, which is clearly a shallow and casual art form. Such feminists reflect the mentality of a victim of de Sade, whereas pornography's image is changing through the TV outlet to be more and more X-rated versions of *Adam's Rib*. Attempts to cast the male form as a cultural symbol have been attributed to the gay front. And charges of exploitation of the female form in advertising only confuse the issue because erotic films are not displaying women's wares in order to sell something else. Eroticism for its own sake does seem to reflect on what is going on in the bedrooms of a nation. The sexually aggressive women in these films reflect, at the very least, the increased expectations of women to get what they want by going after it. It can be argued that sexually "aggressive" women were always a male fantasy; however, the new image of women shows them rejecting the men they don't like, as well as seducing the attractive ones. The idea of choice has been introduced for the female protagonists; and many of them prefer other females—to the exclusion of men, it must be added, lest the old argument come back about lesbianism feeding men's fantasies. Still, I would dare to predict that the backlash against pornography on television may well rise from the male sector, when they begin to fear their own wives watching this and subsequently acting on it, for their psychological assumption remains that women do such things with "other" men.

Obviously the fantasy element reigns over the genre and remains one of the rationalizations for its existence: "It's just fantasy." Anyone who knows much about the film-making process, however, may find the most interesting type of porn that of the self-reflective films like *Let's Make a Porn Movie* or *Exposed* with their self-caricature. As funny and self-revealing as these films were, they reminded me unpleasantly of the awkward

nature of performance in a porn movie. Keeping the sexuality, not to mention the organs, tuned and ready during the tedium of lighting adjustments, lens focusing, continuity checks, and MOS (mit out sound) (sic) directorial guidance implies a nadir of spontaneity. And yet, for porn to be erotic, it must be believable. There can be no room for credibility gaps, if it's to be good. For the same reason, the violence or potential for brutality exasperated me as I imagined some woman being thrown around yet again on take 4 (the supposed maximum number of takes budgeted for porn).

The actual increase in fantasy and decrease in brutality in adult movies has been found to be in a direct relationship to the increase in female viewers. Not only did we operate on the information supplied by our customer surveys that over 60% of our viewers were female, but the Playboy Channel is on record as tailoring its product to and programming for what is believed to be a dominantly female home audience. In an article in *American Film* (March, 1982), Jean Callahan reported that most programming services of adult movies now take women's sensibilities into account. One immediate observation was that women preferred less fragmented shots of sexual acts (fewer shots of isolated genitalia), slow rhythms in the editing of such sequences, and legitimate motivation for erotic relationships (obviously rape was eliminated as a "legitimate" motivation). To the programmers, it also meant incorporating more plot-oriented, complex films with an emphasis on the male/female erotic relationship as a cause for sexual contact. As soap operas have become more sexually liberated, so pornography has become more lathered with psychological problems. An entire type of porn film is, in fact, about marital problems being solved by developing a healthier attitude toward marital sex.

Soft-core porn can also be used as a barometer of cultural change in another way: by viewing the parodies of hit movies in this genre, which invariably seem to substitute female protagonists in the James Bond, sheriff, private-eye, doctor, promoter, publisher or race-car driver roles—a notable shift from the traditional porn-movie roles for women as prostitutes, secretaries, frustrated

wives, actresses or models. In the last decade the genre has shifted with the rest of the film industry toward space fantasy and science fiction, beginning with *Flesh Gordon* and reaching a hilarious peak in *Trashi*. C & W romps pre-dated *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* by about five years; the call-girl stories make *Klute* look reactionary. A favorite genre about the *Barry Lyndon* or *Tess* era is the "quill pen" melodrama with eighteenth-century historical "friction." *Young Lady Chatterly*, *Mistress Pamela*, *Joseph Andrews* and a fascinatingly funny *Autobiography of a Flea* offer frocks and frills, high bosoms and thrills of other times and places. No matter how erotic the era or locale, it boils down to the same objective and the same thing gets shown in all times and even more places.

It may be the "sameness" of it all that, in fact, inspires erotica. A romp through new and nubile bodies has been the prerogative of men for centuries, but as women are beginning to express a low threshold for boredom, cable TV is offering an entire line-up of erotic fare. Women are definitely the target for what I call the ERA-influenced programs: male strippers and men modeling or weight lifting. *Men at Work* sums it up succinctly and stylishly in a handsome parade of prowess. In a way, it is also somewhat old-fashioned in its serial presentation, almost like burlesque. More traditional burlesque seems to be aimed at both sexes, with a certain appeal to women who wonder what it is like to be a sex-object; or, at least the information seems to be in excess of what a man might want to know. Thus the good old-fashioned girls of *Miss World Burlesque* are evolving into contestants seeking more lucrative gratification than applause in things like *So You Want to be a Centerfold?* and *Penthouse Pet of the Year*, with their *Playboy* style documentary approach.

My over-exposure to porn ultimately raised more questions in my own mind than I can address in a single article, or can be answered either by the confessions of Scott MacDonald or the thundering of *The Village Voice* about *Not a Love Story*. My "report from the field" does not seek to answer them all, but merely to offer some observations and directions from first-hand experience. While engaged in this enterprise at the station, I was often visited by my curious colleagues who, to my

surprise, seemed prompted by the vista of thumping thighs on the monitor to offer confessions of their own. Ultimately, they would also ask me why or how I could do this job, and I, in turn, asked them what they thought my motivations were. I kept notes and, of a cross-section of some 50 administrators, clerks, salespeople, and ad executives, and their secretaries, I received answers that I categorized in the following way and present here in their order of popularity. (I presume they are projections on to me by my colleagues.)

1. Like Chauncey Gardner, I “like to watch.”
2. I want people to enjoy cheaper, more private, less threatening thrills (most popular with women).
3. Censoring sex is a power-trip, not unlike castration (which split the male vote with #1 above).
4. Carnal knowledge is just another branch of epistemology (my suggestion, which attracted four women).

I believe this list, however flippantly formulated, reveals several of the issues and layers of meaning in our reactions to porn films in

their various guises. Beyond the sheer voyeurism made possible by skin flicks (beyond “being there”) lies a healthy, unneurotic, unthreatening option for viewers: late-night cable or pay-TV, which is “used,” according to Callahan’s article, by couples and affords the privacy to carry through on the suggestive nature of porn. Meanwhile, the dangers of over-reacting to the idea of pornography lead to accusations and counter-accusations among feminists, as Ruby Rich has warned; feminism ought to be able to discuss the issues of pornography without dismissing the importance of sexuality. In fact, it ought to take a revealing peek at its own image through the eyes of female porn directors, who often consider themselves feminists. The many concomitant issues surrounding female sexuality must be addressed separately from the soft-core cable-TV image. (But can we toss out the baby without the bathwater?)

Ultimately, I hope that we can simply learn more about human sexuality and the cinema; perhaps self-knowledge and cinema knowledge intersect here.

Reviews

DEATH WATCH

Director: Bertrand Tavernier. Script: David Rayfiel and Tavernier. Camera: Pierre-William Glenn. Music: Antoinie Duhamel. Quartet Films.

Bertrand Tavernier’s first English-language film, *Death Watch*, seems haunted by a contradiction. This movie about the scandalous mass appeal of a woman’s death on national television has been an unusually long time in finding American distribution and has not met with more than limited attention from even art house audiences. Yet its own premises can account for this. The videotaped realism of death, perversely certified by a voyeuristic transmission of that most private of moments, might well be universally riveting. On the other hand, the cinematic critique of such video pandering, in an ironic narrative parable that renders this long dying in a manner both distanced and incriminating, punishes the very motives that might invite popular attendance. The seductions of melodrama turn to satiric “metadrama” right before our eyes. *Death*

Watch, in short, is a fiction downbeat and eminently resistible, whereas the TV docudrama it foresees in some future state would have the savor of forbidden access to the “real thing.”

Death Watch is based on David Compton’s novel *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe*, whose title suggests, beyond the double graveyard pun of the heroine’s last name, the usurping of her continuous presence by sheer video image. The movie tracks the heroine, played by Romy Schneider in the last film she was to make before her own death, from the disclosure of her fatal illness through her flight from both TV crews and police to her eventual death, as far removed as she can get from the technologized metropolis of this all too near future. The intrusive attempts to televise the last days of her poignant story are transformed, for us as well as the TV audience, to the furious escape scenes of an overheated thriller—for even in her evasive actions she is being secretly